

Message Text

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE WASHDC CAPE TOWN DURBAN BLANTYRE
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FROM LUSAKA MAY 18 REPEATED

QUOTE

LUSAKA 0910

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TAGS: CASC, MOPS, RH, ZA

SUBJECT: ZAMBIAN COMMUNIQUE ON INVESTIGATION OF BORDER
SHOOTING INCIDENT

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

DEPARTMENT PASS USIA/ IAA

1. ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT ISSUED FOLLOWING COMMUNIQUE.
2. " GOVERNMENT COMMUNIQUE ON THE SHOOTING INCIDENT IN THE
GORGES OF THE ZAMBEZI

TWO DAYS AGO THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THAT IT WAS
CARRING OUT INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE SHOOTING INCIDENT WHICH OCCURRED
AT THE VICTORIA FALLS POWER STATION ON TUESDAY, 15 TH MAY, 1973.
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INVESTIGATIONS HAVE NOW BEEN DULY COMPLETED AND IT HAS BEEN FOUND
THAT A SENTRY ON GUARD DUTY AT THE VITAL POWER STATION IN THE
FOURTH GORGE OPENED FIRE WHICH RESULTED INTO THE REPORTED DEATHS
OF TWO CANADIAN NATIONALS AND THE WOUNDING OF ONE AMERICAN MAN.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO GIVE THE BACKGROUND TO THE SITUATION WHICH LED TO SUCH AN UNHAPPY INCIDENT. SINCE U. D. I. IN 1965 ZAMBIA HAS BEEN UNDER ATTACK FROM THE REBEL REGIME IN SALISBURY AND ITS SUPPORTERS, ZAMBIA HAS BEEN A VICTIM OF COUNTLESS ACTS OF AGGRESSION PARTICULARLY ON THE BORDERS WITH MINORITY REGIMES. LAST YEAR IN SEPTEMBER, FOLLOWING RENEWED THREATS FROM SALISBURY, GOVERNMENT TOOK VERY STRICT SECURITY MEASURES WHICH INCLUDED THE GROUNDING OF ALL PRIVATE AIRCRAFT. THE ZAMBEZI RIVER WAS DECLARED A RESTRICTED AREA AND ALL WATERCRAFTS USING THE ZAMBIAN SIDE OF THE ZAMBEZI WERE GROUNDED.

THE SECURITY MEASURES TAKEN AT THAT TIME REMAIN IN FORCE TO DATE. THESE MEASURES WERE INDEED JUSTIFIED LATER IN THAT YEAR AND PARTICULARLY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR WHEN THE SMITH REGIME INCREASED ITS ACTS OF AGGRESSION AGAINST ZAMBIA AND HER PEOPLE. BEFORE THE BORDER CLOSURE ON THE 9 TH OF JANUARY THIS YEAR, THIS NATION WITNESSED POLITICAL SUBVERSION AND DISSENSION, ECONOMIC STRANGULATION, SABOTAGE AND DIRECT MILITARY ATTACK PARTICULARLY IN BORDER AREAS. MANY SPIES HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN ZAMBIA WORKING FOR REBEL RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA. ZAMBIA STILL FACES THE RHODESIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN ARMIES BASED IN RHODESIA. THERE ARE MILITARY CAMPS ON THE RHODESIAN SIDE OF THE VICTORIA FALLS AREA INCLUDING THE GORGES. THE TARGET IS ZAMBIA, ITS VITAL INSTALLATIONS AND ALL ITS PEOPLE.

THE LANDMINES PLANTED BY REBEL FORCES IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CLOSURE OF THE BORDER CLAIMED THIRTEEN ZAMBIAN LIVES AND LEFT SCORES OF INNOCENT ZAMBIANS MAIMED. ALL THESE INCIDENTS, TOGETHER WITH THE CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF THE REBELLION IN RHODESIA, HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TENSION EXISTING ON THE ZAMBEZI RIVER. THE EXISTENCE OF THIS TENSION WAS CONFIRMED BY THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY

COUNCIL MISSION AND THE ENTIRE WORLD HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SITUATION ON THE RHODESIA/ ZAMBIA BORDER IS DANGEROUS. IT IS DANGEROUS TO PEACE AND SECURITY, IT IS DANGEROUS TO LIFE ALONG THE ENTIRE 743 KILOMETRE BORDER WITH REBEL RHODESIA.

THERE HAVE BEEN NUMEROUS VIOLATIONS OF OUR TERRITORY BY AIR, BY LAND AND BY WATER ALONG THE ZAMBIAN/ RHODESIAN FRONTIER. INDEED, UNCLASSIFIED

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EXCEPT FOR THE MAXIMUM RESTRAINT EXERCISED BY THE ZAMBIAN ARMED FORCES, THE EXISTING TENSION COULD HAVE ALREADY ERUPTED INTO AN OPEN CONFLICT. DESPITE CALCULATED PROVOCATIONS WE IN ZAMBIA HAVE REFUSED TO PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF RECKLESS AND LAWLESS MEN.

IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF GROWING TENSION IN THIS REGION AND PARTICULARLY ON THE ZAMBEZI THAT THE TUESDAY INCIDENT MUST BE VIEWED.

THE INVESTIGATIONS HAVE REVEALED THAT AT 1430 HOURS AN OFFICER OF THE ZAMBIA ARMY ON GUARD DUTY AT THE POWER STATION SUDDENLY NOTICED FOUR PERSONS WHO, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, LOOKED LIKE MEN. THE SENTRY OBSERVED THAT THEY WERE MOVING AT THE EDGE OF THE WATER, DEEP IN THE GORGE. THEY WERE MOVING IN A SINGLE FILE ON THE RHODESIAN SIDE BUT TOWARDS THE BEND OPPOSITE THE POWER STATION. THE SENTRY NOTICED THAT

THESE FOUR PERSONS WERE WEARING SWIMMING COSTUMES WITH WHAT APPEARED TO BE BANDOLEERS OR WATERPROOF GEAR FOR PROTECTING EXPLOSIVES. THE MOVEMENT

OF THESE PEOPLE AND THEIR INTENSE INTEREST IN THE SCENERY ON THE ZAMBIAN

BANKS APPEARED VERY SUSPICIOUS. AFTER REACHING THE BEND ONE OF THE PERSONS REMAINED BEHIND WHILE THREE OF THEM PROCEEDED ROUND IT AND REACHED A ROCK. ON REACHING THE ROCK WHERE THE CURRENT APPEARED TO HAVE BEEN SLOW THE THREE GOT INTO THE WATER AND BEGAN TO SWIM TOWARDS THE " SILENT POOL " WHICH IS ON THE ZAMBIAN SIDE OF THE ZAMBEZI.

AS ONE OF THEM REMAINED BEHIND THE SENTRY IMMEDIATELY FELT THAT THERE COULD HAVE BEEN ANOTHER GROUP GIVING COVER TO THE FOUR AND THEREFORE HAD TO TAKE THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS. FROM THEIR ACTIONS IT BECAME EVIDENT TO HIM THAT THEY WERE ON A MISSION TO ATTACK THE POWER

STATION WHICH ONE OF THE MOST VITAL INSTALLATIONS IN ZAMBIA AND THE ONLY ONE IN THE AREA.

IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THE SENTRY FELT COMPELLED TO ACT SWIFTLY. HE FIRED ON THE SWIMMERS WHO BY THAT TIME WERE IN ZAMBIAN WATERS. ONE OF THEM IMMEDIATELY DISAPPEARED UNDER THE CURRENT WHILE THE OTHER TWO STRUGGLED AGAINST THE CURRENT TOWARDS THE RHODESIAN BANKS. THE FOURTH PERSON WHO REMAINED ON THE RHODESIAN BANKS OF THE ZAMBEZI WAS RUNNING AWAY AND THE GUARDSMAN DID NOT FIRE AT THIS PERSON. THE GUARDSMAN WITHDREW FOR COVER AND, WITH HIS COLLEAGUES, KEPT THE AREA UNDER GENERAL OBSERVATION.

AN HOUR LATER THE GUARDSMEN NOTICED ONLY ONE PERSON WAS LYING ON THE ROCK, THE OTHER ONE HAD DISAPPEARED. NO FURTHER ACTION WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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TAKEN BY THEM ON THAT DAY.

THE FOLLOWING DAY THEY NOTICED THAT THE BODY ON THE ROCK HAD DISAPPEARED.

IN ASSESSING THESE EVENTS IT IS IMPORTANT TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT:

FIRST: THE ZAMBEZI RIVER IS AN AREA OF TENSION.

SECOND: THE AREA IN WHICH THE INCIDENT TOOK PLACE IS VERY EXCLUSIVE AND INACCESSIBLE TO TOURISTS AND CASUAL VISITORS. EVER SINCE ZAMBIAN TROOPS TOOK UP POSITIONS AND STARTED GUARD- DUTIES NO PEOPLE HAVE EVER BEEN SEEN IN THIS AREA OF THE GORGE. THE GUARDSMEN WERE THEREFORE ALARMED TO SEE FOUR PERSONS MAKING A SUDDEN APPROACH MARCHING IN A SINGLE FILE TOWARDS THE INSTALLATION.

THIRD: THIS IS NOT A NORMAL AREA FOR TOURISTS. IN THIS CONNECTION ACCOUNT SHOULD BE TAKEN OF THE DEPTH OF THE GORGE AND THE CONSIDERABLE DISTANCE FROM THE BEND THROUGH THE GORGE TO THE ORIGINAL BASE. IN THE VIEW OF THE GUARDSMEN ONLY PERSONS WITH A CONCRETE MISSION COULD HAVE TRAVELLED ALL THE WAY THROUGH DIFFICULT TERRAIN TO THE BEND OPPOSITE THE ZAMBIAN POWER STATION.

FOURTH: CIVILIANS WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE ALLOWED BY THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES TO WANDER AROUND IN THIS GENERAL AREA

WITHOUT BEING ESCORTED.

IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT THERE ARE RHODESIAN MILITARY CAMPS IN THE VICINITY OF THE VICTORIA FALLS AREA ACROSS THE ZAMBEZI, IT WAS EVIDENT TO THE GUARDSMEN THAT THE PERSONS BEFORE THEM HAD A MISSION CONNECTED WITH TREATS TO ZAMBIA'S SECURITY. THEREFORE, THE SENTRY ON DUTY COULD NOT HAVE TAKEN THESE PERSONS TO BE INNOCENT. HIS DUTY WAS TO DEFEND THE POWER STATION. THE RACE, COLOUR OR NATIONALITY OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED DID NOT COUNT.

FACED WITH SUCH A SITUATION, THE SENTRY ON DUTY TOOK THE ONLY REASONABLE COURSE THAT WAS IMMEDIATELY OPEN TO HIM IN DEFENCE OF THE POWER STATION AND THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE.

THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA DEEPLY REGRETS THAT THE SHOOTING LED TO THE DEATHS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE. BUT THE RESPONSIBILITY LIES WITH THE SMITH REGIME; FIRSTLY, THIS AREA IS KNOWN BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO BE AN AREA OF TENSION AND POTENTIAL CONFLICT. THEREFORE,

AS TOURISTS, THE FOUR PERSONS CONCERNED SHOULD HAVE BEEN WARNED ABOUT DANGEROUS AREAS WHERE IT WAS UNSAFE TO VISIT. UNDER NORMAL UNCLASSIFIED

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TOURIST PRACTICE, TOURISTS CANNOT BE TAKEN TO AREAS OF CONFLICT PARTICULARLY WHEN EVENTS ARE COMPLETELY UNPREDICTABLE. IN ZAMBIA, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ZAMBIA NATIONAL TOURIST BUREAU SUSPENDED VISITS TO THE VICTORIA FALLS BRIDGE AND THE GORGES, AND FOR A CONSIDERABLE PERIOD TO THE RIVERSIDE DRIVE. IN ADDITION, CRUISES ON THE MAKUMBI WERE SUSPENDED FOR SOME TIME DURING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY THIS YEAR. AT PRESENT CRUISES AND VISITS TO THE RIVERSIDE DRIVE ON THE ZAMBEZI RIVER ARE UNDERTAKEN WITH MAXIMUM PRECAUTION TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS.

SECONDLY, IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE SECURITY FORCES OF REBEL RHODESIA GUARDING THE VICTORIA FALLS AREA INCLUDING THE GORGE COULD HAVE LEFT FOREIGNERS TO WANDER AROUND UNWARNED, UNESCORTED

AND UNCOVERED FOR THREE HOURS AND FOR SUCH A LONG DISTANCE IN DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS TERRAIN UNTIL THEY GOT TO THE POWER STATION. IT IS ALSO INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE RHODESIAN TOURIST ORGANISATION AT THE VICTORIA FALLS COULD NOT ONLY HAVE WARNED THESE TOURISTS ABOUT THE DANGEROUS TENSION IN THE AREA BUT ALSO ABOUT THE SERIOUS HAZARDS OF SWIMMING IN CROCODILE INFESTED WATERS.

ALL THESE FACTS DEMONSTRATE THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEATHS OF THESE INNOCENT DANADIAN NATIONALS AND THE WOUNDING OF AN AMERICAN RESTS SQUARELY ON THE REBEL REGIME IN SALISBURY.

IT IS THEREFORE CLEAR THAT THE RHODESIAN AUTHORITIES WERE NOT ONLY NEGLIGENT BUT ALSO SHOWED A RECKLESS INDIFFERENCE TO THE SAFETY OF THESE INNOCENT PERSONS.

ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION BROADCASTING AND TOURISM
LUSAKA.

MAY 18, 1973."

NELSON UNQUOTE RUSH

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